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### American Guides

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tion in California and fully recognizes the moral and legal dilemmas that arise before, during, and after a researcher witnesses a violent event, he seems to rebuff any ethical implications of his work by arguing that no one was “mortally wounded” (p. 14) during his observations and that the information was provided to various school districts to help “develop programs to stop the violence” (p. 15). Yet I remain concerned that the benefits of this study may not truly outweigh the potential harm to the participants. These were low-income, minority high school students who were observed by an adult for two to three years (depending on the school) without comment or intervention. Although I appreciate how careful Sánchez-Jankowski was in keeping track of the length of each violent episode, often reporting down to the minute, as you move through the book, it becomes difficult to read the racist and aggressive language of these youth and hear descriptions of the violent outcomes between teenagers, knowing that the research scholar was sometimes in a vacant classroom, using his “binoculars” and “wristwatch stopwatch function to observe and record students’ interactions” (p. 206).

As I draw attention to an ethical dilemma I remain conflicted; I can appreciate how the data Sánchez-Jankowski collected undoubtedly could not have been ascertained through other methods and these findings most certainly contribute to a more thorough sociological understanding of the process of group violence. Yet I imagine that over time, one of the most striking features of this book will be a debate about the ethics of observing violence among children.

*American Guides: The Federal Writers’ Project and the Casting of American Culture.* By Wendy Griswold. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. Pp. xiv + 314. \$105.00 (cloth); \$35.00 (paper).

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Wendy Griswold’s *American Guides: The Federal Writers’ Project and the Casting of American Culture* is the second volume in a trilogy about regionalism and the culture of place. Griswold seeks to show how regionalism operates through shaping, that is, “casting” American culture. Adopting a welcome historical perspective, called for by scholars such as David Inglis (“What Is Worth Defending in Sociology Today? Presentism, Historical Vision and the Uses of Sociology,” *Cultural Sociology* 8: 99–118), the book examines the Federal Writers’ Project (FWP) in the United States during the Great Depression, in particular the project’s American Guide Series. Between 1935 and 1942, the FWP produced guides for all states and territories. The guides offer a combination of travel advice, state history, social aspects, and literature organized in three sections: essays, cities, and tours.

Griswold's main empirical claim is that the American Guide Series unintentionally shaped American culture into state-shaped molds and that, in so doing, it increased diversity within American literature—unintentionally because the government's intervention in the arts had “nothing whatsoever to do with culture, regional or otherwise” (p. 9). Instead, the FWP was “first and foremost a jobs program” (p. 10). In turn, the state mold and the imperative to produce a guide for each state forced the unprecedented inclusion of women, ethnically diverse, and rural, authors into the American literary canon.

The book's main theoretical claim is that “culture's initial, *sine qua non* impact comes through form, not content” (p. 1). This narrower conception of culture as “the arts” (literature, theater, music) is different from that adopted by other cultural sociologists, such as Jeffrey Alexander (*The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology* [Oxford University Press, 2003]), and locates Griswold's work within the sociology of culture rather than cultural sociology. One of the benefits of this narrower conception is that it allows for a focused analysis of the interactions between the material, bureaucratic, economic, political, and cultural aspects of the production and critical reception of the state guides as cultural objects. It also offers a framework for the identification of causal relations. One disadvantage is the relative neglect of the wider cultural structures within which the production and reception of the guides are situated, most notably, narratives of nationalism vis-à-vis regional or state identities.

The book is divided into five parts, a concluding chapter, and seven appendixes. Part 1, “Jobs for Writers,” highlights that the FWP was, above all, about jobs, a New Deal response to the consequences of the Depression. As an agency of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the FWP's mission was to offer employment to able-bodied, destitute writers in the difficult context of accusations of government interference, wastefulness, and subversion. Griswold demonstrates that the project came into existence by chance and that it had to adapt to pacify its critics, showing how the deployment of institutional imperatives often adopts unintended forms and has unintended outcomes. Part 2, “Guides for Travelers,” situates the American Guides in the history of travel guides abroad and within the United States and traces the changes in the market for them during the 1930s due to the boom in tourism by car. Part 3, “Cultural Federalism,” describes the project's work. The fascinating account recreates the interactions and conflicts between, on one hand, the East Coast elite conceiving and managing the project in Washington, D.C. and their push for standardized but at the same time local and unique descriptions of the states and, on the other hand, the state administrators who were tasked with producing the content locally and who managed important degrees of autonomy. Although Griswold does not cite Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* (University of California Press, 1982), the analysis shows very clearly how “art is a collective endeavor” (p. 34). Part 4, “Readers and Authors,” explains how the guides were conceived for readers as much as for travelers and focuses on the literature es-

says and the influence of the project directors' tastes. It also provides evidence for the leveling and diversifying effect of the imperative to find state literatures by describing the process of the selection of essay authors. Part 5, "Casting Culture," presents research on the material traces of the guides' use to argue they were most likely used as reading material at home, in school, or in libraries rather than as practical guides for the road. Competing travel guides were, in fact, much more informative for drivers; their positive reception and enduring value lie, instead, in the essays and the transformation of the literary canon they brought about. More on how the guides were (and continue to be) read would have been necessary here to further support the idea that they shaped American culture: How did readers' interaction with the guides shape their conceptions of the state or of the nation as a group of states with distinct literatures/cultures?

One aspect of the book's argument that remains implicit is the connection between (state) literature and (state) culture and between these and American culture more broadly. The changes within the restricted literary space have wider, cultural-cum-political implications. By "introducing America to Americans" (p. 29) in a state mold, the guides supported the creation of state-level imagined communities and melded "regional distinctiveness into a united whole" (p. 150). Engaging with work on the nation-building powers of literature (e.g., William St. Claire's *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* [Cambridge University Press, 2004]), which follows Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (Verso, 1991) and with which this book shares a concern with materiality, would have underscored the wider significance of this research.

*American Guides* offers a richly detailed, rigorous, and sophisticated account of cultural production in keeping with Griswold's previous work. It will be of interest to sociologists generally and especially to sociologists of culture and scholars working on the history of the book, material culture, mobility, leisure, elites, regionalism, and nationalism.

*Outsourced Children: Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China.* By Leslie K. Wang. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016. Pp. x+190. \$24.95 (paper).

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Leslie K. Wang's *Outsourced Children: Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China* examines how the Chinese state has actively outsourced the care work of children through adopting out mostly healthy girls to Western families and also by utilizing first world resources, actors, and practices to care for mostly special needs children left behind. Further, the book explores how such transnational exchanges, in turn, have played a crucial role in Chinese modernity. Wang contests the unidirectional portrayal of inter-